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ABSTRACT

States have experienced varying levels of success in the transfer of credits between institutions of higher education and in the development and implementation of articulation policy, agreements, and structures. A look at the approaches currently being used in the southeastern region of the United States can help to identify options and provide a basis for comparison of articulation alternatives for Georgia. It also identifies competing alternatives for Georgia graduates of occupational associate degree programs who are unable to find acceptable credit transfer within their home state colleges. Information for the research was gathered by telephone interviews with personnel from state education offices in the states surrounding Georgia: Alabama, Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. The research found that Florida, North Carolina, and South Carolina have a separate state board for postsecondary two-year institutions and community college systems, whereas in Tennessee, two-year colleges and technical schools are under the university board of regents and in Alabama one board of education governs both postsecondary technical and K-12 education. Structural arrangements for postsecondary vocational education institutions in the five states vary from large, centralized community college systems (North Carolina, Florida) that integrate technical and academic education, to states (Tennessee, Alabama) that continue to separate the noncollegiate and technical schools from the collegiate and university-parallel two-year colleges. South Carolina has integrated vocational and academic programs at the community colleges, but does not have a coordinated system in the state. Regional accreditation for all five states is from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools-Commission on Colleges. Legislative assurance of transfer between two- and four-year colleges exists in some form in three states for associate degrees. The research concluded that each of the five states has addressed many of the same issues facing Georgia and that removing barriers to adult learners' progression from occupational courses to baccalaureate degrees is an ongoing process. (KC)

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GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF TECHNICAL AND ADULT EDUCATION

BRIEFING PAPER

SEAMLESS EDUCATION: A REGIONAL VIEW OF POSTSECONDARY TRANSFER POLICY AND PRACTICE

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Occupational Research Group

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No two state systems of higher education are exactly alike. States have experienced varying levels of success in the transfer of credits between institutions of higher education and in the development and implementation of articulation policy, agreements, and structures. A look at the approaches currently being used in the southeastern region of the United States can help to identify options and provide a basis for comparison of articulation alternatives for Georgia. It also identifies competing alternatives for Georgia graduates of occupational associate degree programs who are unable to find acceptable credit transfer within their home state colleges.

Information reported in the charts which follow was gathered by telephone interview with personnel from state education offices in the states surrounding Georgia: Alabama, Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. The following questions guided the discussions with state staff members:

1.) What is the structure of the governance system in your state?
2.) Is there a distinct community college system in your state?
3.) Where does postsecondary vocational/technical education fit into your education system?
4.) What type of articulation and credit transfer agreements or activities exist between occupational associate degrees and four-year colleges or universities?
5.) What are the levels of credentials awarded in your system?
6.) What type of regional accreditation is used?
7.) How are students assured of transfer success in your state?
8.) Which types of occupational programs seem to lend themselves most readily to transfer?

State personnel in the following state offices were asked to provide responses to the above questions: Alabama Office of Trade, Industrial, and Technology Education; Florida Division of Vocational, Adult, and Community Education; North Carolina Department of Public Instruction; South Carolina State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education; and Tennessee Board of Regents. The telephone interviews were conducted by the Project Coordinator of the Occupational Research Group at the University of Georgia in Fall, 1993.

Following is a summary of key information that emerged in the interview discussion. The charts at the end of this paper summarize the interview information for each of the five states.

Governance: Three of the states (FL, NC, SC) have a separate state board for postsecondary two-year institutions and community college systems. In one state (TN) two-year colleges and technical schools are under the university board of regents. In another state (AL) one Board

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of Education governs both postsecondary technical and K-12 education.

Structure of Postsecondary Technical Education: Structural arrangements for postsecondary vocational education institutions in the five states vary from large, centralized community college systems (NC, FL) that integrate technical and academic education, to states (TN, AL) that continue to separate the non-collegiate/technical schools from the collegiate/university-parallel two-year colleges. Another state (SC) has integrated vocational and academic programs at the community colleges, but does not have a coordinated system in the state. The other state without a coordinated community college system (AL) is considering establishing one.

Articulation: Four-year colleges in all five states generally accept general education or core courses in university-parallel programs, i.e., the Associate in Arts (AA) and Associate in Science (AS) degrees, on a routine basis. Where transfer occurs with Associate in Applied Science (AAS) degrees, it seems to be on a course-by-course, program-by-program, or institution-by-institution basis, including some local articulation agreements.

Credentials and Accreditation: Regional accreditation for all five states is the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools - Commission on Colleges (COC). In those states with noncollegiate technical schools, the SACS Commission on Occupational Education Institutions (COEI) is the accrediting body. Credentials awarded by the postsecondary vocational/community colleges include the AA, AS, AAS, AFA, and AAT degrees in addition to certificates and diplomas. Only one state (AL) awards the AAT degree and this is being phased out. Another (FL) awards the AS degree for occupational programs, but is trying to change this to the AAS which is the nationally recognized associate level degree for occupational programs.

Transfer: Legislative assurance of transfer between two- and four-year colleges exists in some form in three states for AA and AS degree university parallel programs. Transfer in occupational program areas, when it does occur, is most often in the engineering technologies (all five states). Acceptance of associate degree allied health and business programs for transfer occurs in two states as well. Credit transfer of occupation-specific courses is often on a course-by-course equivalency evaluation basis and varies among colleges in the states.

It is apparent that each of the five states has had to address many of the same issues being discussed in Georgia today. It also can be seen that the removal of barriers that prevent adult learners from progressing unimpeded from associate degree occupational courses to baccalaureate degrees without unnecessary loss of credit, time, or money is an ongoing process, with multiple solutions, requiring cooperation at all levels of the educational system.

GDTAE Briefing Papers are prepared by the Occupational Research Group at the University of Georgia, School of Leadership and Lifelong Learning under contract to Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education, to summarize emerging issues in the national literature on postsecondary technical education.

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REGIONAL TRANSFER AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEMS (AL, FL, NC, SC, TN)

(1) Governance System	(2) Community College System	(3) Post-secondary Vo-Tech Ed	(4) Articulation	(5) Credentials	(6) Regional Accreditation	(7) Transfer Assurance	(8) Occupational Transfer
ALABAMA							
One Board of Education (elected) serves K-12 and two-year institutions (technical colleges, junior colleges, and community colleges). Board meets separately for two systems; Governor sits on board. State Superintendent of schools appointed by the board, not responsible to the governor. Alabama Council on Higher Education is governing body for four-year institutions.	No	Effort is underway to merge technical colleges, junior colleges, and community colleges to form one community college system.	Only one 4-yr college accepts AA and AS degrees, provides last two years of bachelors degree exclusively. Unsuccessful in reaching general agreement for articulation of associate degrees. Have transfer directory listing courses that transfer readily and several individual agreements between institutions. AAS degree does not claim transferability (college departments working together to facilitate transfer between Shelton State Community College and University of Alabama Birmingham).	Certificate, diploma, AAS, AA, AS. AAT is being phased out.	SACS-COC; (for AAT programs being phased out, SACS - COEI).	AS or AA degree programs have transfer assurance. Bill is being proposed in Alabama legislature to mandate transfer of associate degrees (unclear how this would affect AAS degree).	Engineering Technology, Drafting Technology
Comments/Summary:							

Note: AA = Associate of Arts, AS = Associate of Science, AAS = Associate of Applied Science, AAT = Associate of Applied Technology

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SOUTH CAROLINA							
State Board of Education for Pre K-12 (a collaboration unit also works with other levels of governance structure). State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education governs technical/community colleges. No statewide Board of Regents. All four-year institutions have a local board. Commission on Higher Education acts as approval body for new programs, evaluates all associate degree level and higher program offerings at both two-year and four-year institutions.	Yes--has 16 colleges. Community colleges act as feeder programs or two-year branch campuses for U of South Carolina.	Community colleges have integrated postsecondary vocational/technical education programs on the same campuses with university parallel programs.	Occupational courses are increasingly transferring, on a school-by-school basis. All general core courses are designed to be transferrable to four-year baccalaureate programs.	AA, AS (university parallel). Occupational associate degrees are designated with descriptors indicating the content of the program, (eg., Associate of Business AB, Associate of Health Science AHS). These equate to the AAS degree.	SACS-COC	Transfer of general education courses in occupational associate degree programs occurs routinely; occupation-specific courses are transferred on a school-by-school basis.	Many occupational programs transfer. Associate of Business, Associate of Engineering Technology, Associate of Health Science, Associate of Agriculture.
Comments/Summary:							

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TENNESSEE							
Board of Education governs K-12. Two systems of higher education: 1) Univ of Tennessee--four campuses; 2) Board of Regents, policy board for 6 universities, 14 two-year colleges, and 26 postsecondary noncollegiate technical schools. Tennessee Higher Education Commission is arm of legislature empowered to receive funding (coordinating board, not a policy board). The Commission also looks at activities of private institutions.	There are community colleges but not a coordinated system.	Of 14 two-year institutions under Board of Regents, 2 are technical institutes offering AAS only, 12 institutions offer both university parallel and AAS degree. Also 26 noncollegiate technical schools.	For university parallel degrees, there is an assumption that institutions in the system will facilitate transfer mobility, to avoid cost and program duplication, accomplished on a school-by-school basis. Universities expected to work with two-year colleges in developing articulation agreements. There is a lot of transfer between universities and two-year colleges for students in applied degrees, but it is mostly course-by-course equivalency evaluation/ transcript audit evaluation, that takes place upon transfer.	Certificate of competency, diploma, AAS, AS, AA.	SACS-COC; for 26 noncollegiate technical schools, SACS-COEI.	To be assured transfer, student must be in university parallel program (AA, AS). Other transfer is on a course-by-course equivalency evaluation.	Engineering Technologies
Comments/Summary: RE: transferring occupational programs: "there is potential, but this type of inverted degree articulation is difficult because the student takes fewer courses in the major at the lower division and universities are reluctant to award upper division credit in their own curriculum. We are working on it. We are moving toward it, but right now there is not an agreement."							

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FLORIDA							
State Board of Education includes governor and 7 cabinet members. Governs K-12 (and postsecondary vocational to some extent). State Board of Community Colleges is coordinating board for 28 community colleges and 30 noncollege postsecondary adult vocational sites. Board of Regents is governing body for four-year colleges and universities.	Yes--28 colleges.	Community colleges offer both vocational and nonvocational, college-level and noncollege-level programs. 33 postsecondary adult vocational sites owned by local school districts offer only noncollege credit programs for adult learners. Periodic debate over including these sites with community colleges, but no action taken so far.	For occupational programs, there are some local agreements. Most transfer occurs on a course-by-course agreement basis. There is a common course numbering system, works best for AA degree courses.	Vocational certificate (both noncollege and college level), AA, AS (AS degree is the credential awarded for all of the occupational areas). Presently trying to change to be more in line with other states use of AS and AAS degrees.	Community colleges: SACS COC; noncollege sites: SACS COEI.	Law in Florida ensures transfer for community college students in university parallel AA degrees. Common course numbering system for many occupational courses. Most dependable method of transfer involves administrator-to-administrator and faculty-to-faculty agreements on content of programs and specific courses.	Engineering Technology, Electronics Technology, Hospitality Industry Occupations, Nursing, Respiratory Therapy, Business Education, and Computer Integrated Manufacturing Programs.

Comments/Summary: The Florida Articulation Agreement went into effect in May 1975. Students who graduate from a community college and hold an Associate in Arts degree are automatically admitted into one of the state universities, and all of their courses are accepted as transfer credit. Students may still have to complete certain prerequisites to be admitted to a particular program, but they do not have to meet the general education requirements at the university.

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NORTH CAROLINA							
3 components make up governance system: State Board of Education for K-12, State Board of Community Colleges for all two-year institutions, Board of Governors for four-year colleges and universities.	Yes---system has 58 colleges.	Very large system of vocational/technical education integrated into system of community colleges, serves over 660,000 students.	General education components of AS, AA, and Associate of Fine Arts (AFA) degrees transfer. AAS, diploma, and certificate credits do not normally transfer. Some agreements being worked out college-by-college. Appalachian State U, East Carolina U, and U of North Carolina at Charlotte offer technical baccalaureate degrees that accept community college technical program credit (AAS).	Certificate, diploma, AAS, AS, AA, AFA.	SACS-COC	No legislation exists to ensure transfer.	UNC at Charlotte offers BS in Engineering Technology, allows community college students in Engineering Technology programs to transfer in as juniors. ASU and ECU offer technical degrees.
Comments/Summary: Foresee that transfer of academic components of technical AAS degrees is coming.							

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